

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 023

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAINI CONCERNS ABOUT SECURITY COUNCIL
DEBATE ON MIDDLE EAST

SUMMARY: IN WAKE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM'S VISIT TO BAHRAIN, GOB FOREIGN MINISTER HAS ASKED THAT I CONVEY GOB'S DEEP CONCERN ABOUT UPCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE. SPECIFICALLY, GOB URGES THAT USG FIND SOME WAY TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH SYRIAN-LED ARABS ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE, AVOID APPEARING AS "ISRAEL'S REPRESENTATIVE" IN DEBATE, AND ABSTAIN RATHER THAN VETO ON SYRIAN-SPONSORED ARAB RESOLUTION ON MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. END SUMMARY

1. WHILE I SELDOM SEE TOP GOB OFFICIALS, NOTABLY AMIR AND FOREIGN MINISTER, WITHOUT THEIR DISCUSSING MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, I SELDOM REPORT THEIR OBSERVATIONS. THEY REALIZE FULLY HOW LITTLE INFLUENCE BAHRAIN HAS ON EVENTS, AND WHILE THEY APPRECIATE BEING KEPT INFORMED OF U.S. POLICIES AND INITIATIVES RE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION, THEY ARE USUALLY QUITE
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CAREFUL TO AVOID BOTHERING US WITH SPECIFIC ADVICE. IT IS IN

THIS CONTEXT THAT I CONVEY AT FOREIGN MINISTER'S REQUEST GOB'S DEEP CONCERN ABOUT PERILS OF FORTHCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE TO U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE.

2. IN JANUARY 10 MEETING, FOREIGN MINISTER NOTED THAT WHEN KHADDAM VISITED BAHRAIN THIS WEEK, HE EMPHASIZED SERIOUS DISSATISFACTION WITH U.S. AND EGYPTIAN POSITIONS TOWARD PALESTINIAN QUESTION IN CONTEXT UPCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID KHADDAM TOLD BAHRAINIS THAT "EGYPT IS NO MORE CONCERNED WITH PALESTINIAN PROBLEM THAN IS THE GOVERNMENT OF COMORO ISLANDS". OBVIOUSLY KHADDAM CONVEYED TO GOB THAT SYRIAN DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE IS GOING TO BE SUFFICIENTLY EXPLICIT ON PALESTINIAN RECOGNITION TO CAUSE USG SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER STRESSED GOB'S DEEP SATISFACTION AND APPRECIATION RE ROLE USG HAS PLAYED IN MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM OVER LAST TWO YEARS, ITS FULL UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFICULTY OF PRESENT USG POSITION AND GOB'S SUPPORT OF U.S. POSITION THAT NOTHING MUST BE DONE TO DESTROY PROSPECTS FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE.

4. AT SAME TIME, HE CONVEYED GOB'S FEELING THAT ISRAEL'S INTENDED "BOYCOTT" OF SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE IS NOT ONLY FLAGRANT INSULT TO WORLD COMMUNITY BUT ALSO APPEARS TO TRAP USG INTO POSITION OF BEING ISRAEL'S REPRESENTATIVE IN DEBATE. GOB, POST-KHADDAM VISIT, FEELS THERE MUST BE FORWARD MOVEMENT ON RECOGNIZING RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND HOPES THAT USG CAN ACHIEVE SOME UNDERSTANDING WITH SYRIANS ON THIS ISSUE IN CONTEXT OF SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING. ACCORDING FOREIGN MINISTER, GOB WOULD CONSIDER IT MOST HARMFUL TO U.S. INTERESTS IN ARAB WORLD IF USG PUTS ITSELF IN POSITION OF VETOING AN ARAB RESOLUTION. THEREFORE, GOB HOPES USG, IF IT CANNOT WORK OUT A SATISFACTORY COMPROMISE WITH SYRIANS, CAN AT LEAST ABSTAIN ON ANY SYRIAN-SPONSORED RESOLUTION.

5. I RESPONDED THAT, WHILE I HAD NO SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS AT MOMENT, GOB CERTAINLY IS AWARE OF DELICACY OF PRESENT STAGE OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, OUR SPECIAL ROLE AS ONLY GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF BRINGING ISRAEL TO A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION AND OUR CONCERN
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THAT NOTHING HAPPEN IN SECURITY COUNCIL THAT WOULD SET BACK PROSPECTS FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE. I TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER THIS SEEMED IDEAL TIME FOR ALL ARAB GOVERNMENTS OF GOOD WILL TO BE URGING MODERATION ON SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS TO PREVENT THEM FROM OVERREACHING THEMSELVES AND SERIOUSLY HARMING PEACE PROSPECTS.

6. FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED THAT MODERATE ARABS SUCH AS BAHRAIN CONSIDER PALESTINIANS "JUST AS UNREASONABLE AS USG MUST

CONSIDER ISRAELIS". THE DIFFICULTY, HE CONTINUED, IS THAT IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY ARAB GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY THE GOVERNMENT OF A SMALL COUNTRY, TO CLAIM THAT A SYRIAN RESOLUTION DEALING WITH PALESTINE CAUSE IS IN ANY WAY "UNREASONABLE OR IMMODERATE".

7. COMMENT: GOB IS OBVIOUSLY WORRIED USG ACTION IN COUNCIL WILL EMBARRASS GOB POLICY OF MAINTAINING GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS AND FURTHER DESTABILIZE ARAB WORLD (FOREIGN MINISTER SEVERAL TIMES IN CONVERSATION URGED THAT "ANOTHER LEBANON" NOT BE PERMITTED TO DEVELOP FOR LACK OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE.) FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH GOB OBVIOUSLY FEARS TO SIDE WITH EGYPT AGAINST SYRIA, AND EVEN FINDS SYRIAN POSITION APPEALING TO ARAB LOGIC. GOB WILL BE WATCHING DEBATE CLOSELY. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO EMBASSY THEREFORE TO HAVE AS MUCH GUIDANCE AS POSSIBLE ON U.S. ROLE. END COMMENT
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